

THE NATURE OF GOD

BY ANITA MARIS BOGGS

WHAT is God? The most learned metaphysician and the most ignorant savage alike reply "He is unknowable." Only the mystic philosopher knows that God *IS*. He knows, for he contacted God. He has experienced Him in an experience that exceeds ecstasy, as ecstasy exceeds the normal mode of thought. The ecstasy of St. Theresa, of St. Anthony of Padua, of St. John of the Cross, of Swedenborg, of Jacob Boehme, of Dionysius the Areopagite, of Iamblichus, of the Buddhists in Nirvana, of the Sufien, is the ineffable union of the soul with a conscious being of a nature apparently indescribable, so far does it exceed human thought or terms. It is beyond thought, for the mind enters the union as a secondary factor. Both mind and soul are receptive, negative to the force that comes swirling into them. This force interpenetrates every part of the soul and then the mind until the soul feels itself identified with, yet in some incomprehensible fashion, still a distinct entity from this all pervasive power.

This identification is the supreme moment of the Sufien, the mystic sect of Mohammedanism, the one religion that is strictly unitarian, that countenances no subsidiary gods. To this end, the Zirk is held weekly. Certain ritualistic motions, dances and intoning are begun until, all in unison of bodies, minds and voices give a prolong high pitched cry "WHO-OO" as it sounds to a western ear. With this mystic arabic name of God, they fall on their hands and knees in adoration of the glorious influx of spirit that they all await eagerly, but, except to the chosen few, almost in vain. For this power chooses to whom it will flow consciously. The tantrik and yogi training of the Far East, seek the same, the annihilation of all thought in Samadhi or Union.

The bliss of this union is sufficient to the mystic. Blessed is the soul that has contacted once the pervasive force of Love. Who, in a lifetime contacts it twice, is a saint. Who lives in continual consciousness, is a being beyond the ken of man.

Through the years, the memory lingers for one who has once contacted this bliss and the taste remains. "Sweeter also than the honey and the honey comb" sings the psalmist. Life and its experiences assume a new meaning in the light of the inner vision, a light that may at times be clouded like the sun, but is never extinguished. Who experiences only the Light, experiences the glare. Who stands twice in the presence of God is a saint. Love radiates from him, like a light from an encasing alabaster bowl. By their very presence the saints inspire. Conscious of the exquisiteness of God, they desire only to taste again of His Being. They seek not to serve the world but to enjoy Him. Hear how the Persian mystic one of the greatest of the Sufien, Jalau'uddin Al Rumi, sings of the soul and the almightiness of God in his Mathnawi—

"Do me right, O glory of the Righteous, O Thou who art the dias and I, the threshold of Thy door.

"Where are the threshold and the dias in reality? In the quarter where our Beloved is; where are 'we' and 'I'?

"O Thou whose soul is free from 'we' and 'I,' O Thou who art the subtle essence of the spirit in man and woman,

"When man and woman become one, Thou art that One; when the units are wiped out, lo, Thou art that Unity.

"Thou didst contrive this 'I' and 'we' that Thou mightest play the game of worship with Thyself,

"That all 'I's' and 'thou's' should become one soul and at last should be submerged into the Beloved.

"All this is, and do Thou come, O Thou who givest the command BE, O Thou who transcendest 'Come' and all speech.

"The body can see Thee only in the fashion of the body: it fancies Thy sadness and laughter.

"Do not say that the heart that is bound (by such bodily attributes) is worthy of seeing Thee.

"Who is bound by sadness and laughter is living by means of these two borrowed attributes.

"In the verdant garden of Love, which is without end, there are many fruits besides sorrow and joy.

- “ Love is higher than these two states of feeling, without spring and without autumn it is ever green and fresh.” (Lines 1783-1794.)
- “ Our emotion is not caused by grief, our consciousness is not related to fancy and imagination.
- “ There is another state of consciousness that is rare: do thou not disbelieve for God is very mighty.
- “ Do not judge from the normal state of man, do not abide in wrong or well doing.
- “ Wrong and well doing, grief and joy are things that come into existence; those that come into existence die: God is their heir. (*Lines* 1804-1806.)

THE ALMIGHTINESS OF GOD

- “ We have spoken all these words but in preparing ourselves we are naught, naught without the favours of God.
- “ Without the favours of God and God's elect, angel tho he be, his page is dark.
- “ O God, O Thou whose bounty fulfils every need, it is not allowable to mention anyone beside Thee.
- “ This amount of guidance, hast Thou bestowed upon us; till this time Thou hast covered up many a fault of ours.
- “ Cause the drop of knowledge which Thou gaves to us heretofore, to become united with Thy seas.
- “ In my soul there is a drop of knowledge: deliver it from sensuality and from the body's clay.
- “ Before these clays drink it up, before these winds sweep it away. Although when they sweep it away, Thou art able to take it back from them and redeem it.
- “ The drop that vanished in the air or was spilled on the earth, when did it flee from the storehouse of Thy omnipotence?
- “ If entered into non-existence or a hundred non-existences, it will make a foot of its head (will return in headlong haste) when Thou callest it.
- “ Hundreds of thousands of opposites are killing their opposites: Thy decree is calling them forth again into existence.
- “ There is caravan on caravan, O God, speeding from non-existence into existence.
- “ In particular, every night all thoughts and understandings become

- naught, plunged into the deep Sea.
- " Again at dawn those Divine ones lift up their heads like fishes, from the Sea.
- " In the autumn the myriads of boughs and leaves go into rout into the Sea of Death.
- " In the garden, the crow clothed in black like a mourner makes lament over the greenery.
- " Again from the Lord of the land comes the edict to Non-existence 'Give back what thou hast devoured.'
- " O, brother, collect thy wits for an instant: from moment to moment, incessantly there is autumn and spring within thee.
- " Behold the garden of the heart, green and moist and fresh, full of rosebuds, and cypress and jasmine;
- " Boughs hidden by multitudes of leaves, vast plain and high palace hidden by the multitude of flowers.
- " These words which are from the Universal Reason, are the scent of those flowers and hyacinths and cypresses.
- " Didst thou ever smell the rose where no rose is? The scent is thy guide and conducts thee on thy way.
- " The scent is a remedy for the eye: it is light making. (*Jalalu'uddin Al Rumi*, translated by R. A. Nicholson, Cambridge University Press, 1926.)

To the mystic God is Love to be experienced through the complete merging of all the senses in the supreme act of union. Exultantly sings Jalalu'uddin "I am the Beloved."

Not all human nature is capable of enjoying God, or if such enjoyment has been had, of resting content without explanation of the essential nature of Love and the Beloved. Mind acting without its master love rarely rises to the heights attained by the emotional soul. Its methods are those of ordinary life and so are more understandable by the man of the world. Mind searching the inherent nature of God uses the same methods it would employ in learning to drive a car. First the trial and error method with more errors than success, then concentrated study of the general aspect of the thing as a whole ending with a general hazy knowledge of the aspect or outer appearance or manifestation but no real knowledge, scientific or otherwise, of real motive force inherent in the gasoline, the electric starting spark, or the physical laws governing the motor, generating the power.

Plato, the great Greek philosopher, speculated on the nature of

God. When he formulated the doctrine of the Archetypes, he sought to penetrate the mystery through mind. Positing the highest abstract ideas of which man is capable, he placed these in-forming ideas in invisibility, in unchanging existence: "Does the being, which in our dialectic we define as meaning absolute existence, remain always in the same state, or does it change? Do absolute equality, absolute beauty, and every absolute existence admit any change at all, or does the absolute existence in each case, being essentially uniform, remain the same and unchanging and never in any case admit of any sort or kind of change whatsoever?" "It must remain the same and unchanging, Socrates," said Cebes.

"And what of the many beautiful things such as men and horses and garments and the like and all of which bear the name of ideas, whether equal, beautiful or anything else? Do they remain the same or is it exactly the opposite with them? In short, do they never remain the same at all, either in themselves or in their relations?"

"These things," said Cebes, "never remain the same."

"You can touch them and see them and perceive them with the other senses while you can grasp the unchanging only with the reasoning of the intellect. These latter are invisible and unseen," said Socrates. (*Phaedo*, XXV.)

THE SOUL AND ITS RELATION TO GOD

Socrates continued, "Our souls exist apart from our bodies and possessed intelligence before they came into man's shape. I shall try to explain to you the kind of Cause at which I have worked and I begin with the assumption that there exists an absolute beauty, an absolute good, an absolute greatness and so on. It appears to me that if anything besides absolute beauty is beautiful, it is so simply because it partakes of the absolute beauty, and I say the same of all phenomena—Ideas exist and Phenomena take the name of ideas as they participate in them. A concrete thing is generated from its opposite."

"What is that which must be in the body to make it alive? A soul.

"Then the soul always brings life to whatever contains her, and the

"soul does not admit of death? Then the soul must be immortal.

"If the immortal is imperishable, then the soul cannot perish when

"death comes upon her. She will never admit death or be in a

"state of death. And all men must admit," said Socrates, "that

"God and the essential form of life and all else that is immortal
"never perishes." (*Phaedo*, XL et foll.)

In his *Republic*, Plato defines God as: "One and true in word and deed: He neither changes Himself nor deceives others" (379 et foll). "God alone is wise and knows all things," he states in his *Apology*, 30D.

If God is "the wise," emotion naturally is not the medium through which the soul knows God. Speaking through the mouth of Socrates in the *Apology* (30D), Plato gives the method by which he has realized that God is. "God has commanded me to spend my life in searching for wisdom—I have a certain divine sign from God, it is a voice." A voice presupposes a mental capacity to hear, understand, comprehend, to follow and to act according to its dictates. It is the relation of the master to the servant, of the executive to his assistant. There is no thought of enjoyment. The hearer is not an onlooker watching a procession of "caravans on caravans speeding from non-existence into existence." He is one of the caravan and as such can know only the immediate caravan in which he is. He may know or think he knows the general nature and aspect of others. He may have theoretical knowledge that in other caravans the camels of life proceed differently and to different goals. His immediate knowledge, however, is limited to the one at hand. He is concerned with the ultimate destination of that particular caravan, with obeying the orders of the master camel driver, of cooperating with the other travellers in protecting all their goods from the common enemy that roams the desert of existence, whose camels "pad, pad" swiftly over the golden sands of time. Darting like a shooting star, the enemy attacks the little camp when the watchman's fires burn low. He seizes the travellers. When morning comes, only the camel tracks lead to the horizon. Silent tracks in silent sands to show that once a caravan passed this way. With the sun rises the wind, the sands dance in the heat, revolve in eddies, the camel tracks vanish.

The caravan that has vanished? The master camel driver and his men, the travellers and the camels, all know only that they go not where they had planned. They are carried by a force superior to their own to some unknown destination whose path they know not nor the perils, nor joy, that may await them. Their minds are sand grains swirling with the wind, now alighting here, now

alighting there, drifting into the whirlwinds of indecision, fear and confusion.

Who knows all the caravan routes of God? Who has pitched his black tent of woven camel's hair at all the oases of experience? Who has explored all the modes and moods of the winds of life? The master of the caravan knows his course across the trackless desert, he knows his camels and he knows the cool oases ahead. His road is but one of the infinity of roads. God opens the way and His winds obliterate the tracks.

Can the mind of man in a myriad of lives, travel the path of each star in its course? Can a single mouth drink all the drops in the Sea of Wisdom? Passing through the daily experiences of life, man's mind, like the bee sips now of the jasmine, now of the rose, and often of the bitter aloes. It sips and distills the honey of life in the dark cell of the comb. Of the nature and purpose of the rose, it neither knows nor desires to know. It is content to gather one drop from the infinity of beauty.

Mind is an attribute. It fashions God according to its experiences and the physical environment in which it manifests itself through the body. The highest abstract conception of the bushman of Australia scarcely equals in nobility the lowest material concept of civilized man. Plato posits God as Absolute Idea. The soul, being intelligent, may grasp some conception of God's inherent nature. The God of Plato is a concatenation of attributes and categories, mutually exclusive and therefore infinite. He posits absolute Time, absolute Space, absolute Equality, absolute Beauty, absolute Goodness, absolute Wisdom. How can more than one infinite exist in time or space concurrently? If time and space are eliminated as categories or mental concepts, then all the attributes, the Wise, the Beautiful, the Good must equally be eliminated and the God of abstract mind disappears into complete annihilation.

Reason and judgment are not content to let God disappear in the mists of abstractions. God *is*. God *creates*, God is *omniscient*. What God is, how He creates and why He creates is beyond all possible knowing. The mystic may enjoy God but the mind of man may never attain to the essence of God nor the purpose and method of creation. Dionysius the Areopagite, a christian father and neoplatonist writing probably in the fourth or fifth century after Christ, expresses the position of those to whom God is unknowable:

" Once more ascending yet higher, we maintain that it (God)
 " is not soul, nor mind, one endowed with the faculty of imagina-
 " tion, conjecture, reason nor understanding; nor is It any act
 " of reason nor understanding, nor can It be described, by reason
 " nor perceived by the understanding, since It has not number,
 " nor order, nor greatness or littleness, nor equality nor in-
 " equality, and since It is not immovable, nor in motion nor at
 " rest and has no power and is not power nor light and does not
 " live and is not life; nor is It personal essence or eternity, nor
 " can it be grasped by the understanding since It is not knowl-
 " edge nor truth; nor is It kingship nor wisdom; nor is It One,
 " nor is It unity; nor is It Godhead nor goodness, nor is It a
 " Spirit as we understand spirit, nor is It the Sonship nor the
 " Fatherhood, nor is It any other such thing as we or any other
 " being can have knowledge of, nor does it belong to the category
 " of non existence or to that of existence: nor do existent things
 " know It as It actually is; nor does It know them as they actually
 " are; nor can reason attain to It: to name It: nor to know it:
 " nor is It darkness nor is It light; nor is It error nor truth;
 " nor can any affirmation nor negation apply to It: for while
 " applying affirmations or negations to those orders of beings
 " that come next to It, we apply not unto It either affirmation nor
 " negations inasmuch as It transcends all affirmation by being the
 " perfect and unique Cause of all things and transcends all negation
 " by the preeminence of Its simple and absolute nature—free from
 " all limitation and beyond them all" (*The Mystical Theology*,
 " Ch. V)."

Denying all attributes to God, Dionysius by his very negation
 posits a God more noble more lofty than the highest abstraction
 of that great master mind of Plato could conceive. The God of
 Dionysius is beyond the reach of the mystic soul that would lose it-
 self in the enjoyment of beatitude; It is beyond the mind that would
 infer Its existence through reasoning from the visible to the invisible
 from the concrete to the abstract. It is a God beyond absoluteness
 for It is the Cause. It is unique.

God is unique, unknowable, beyond the reach of the soul of man
 or of his mind, yet Dionysius can describe fully what God is not and
 by the nullification of categories and abstractions of existence can
 present a viril God that is real, that is. When he ascribes affirma-

tions and negations to those orders of beings that come next to it," he refers to the Archetypes of Plato, to the archangels of Jalalu'uddin and the hierarchies of the occult schools. Would Dionysius perhaps retort to the cry of Jalalu'uddin "I am the Beloved": "True, the Beloved of the hierarchy of Love, an order of beings that shadow forth but an aspect of God but who are not God." To Plato, "You have contacted the formative Ideas but God you know not." Perhaps Plato would reply "What O Dionysius is your God?" The Areopagite could but reply "My God is the inscrutable Cause. *What It is* I do not know."

The mystics conceived God through their emotions, They describe positively or negatively, by attributes, "love," "beauty," "holiness," "goodness," "beyond all goodness, all life, all essence, all unity" or negatively "He is not essence, nor life etc." Plato, Aristotle and the followers of "reason," throughout the centuries find God through logic, reason, understanding and wisdom. For Aristotle, "God is the formal Cause, the efficient Cause and the End." Man is in the same relation to God as the object to the subject with "be" balancing them. Since man is a thinking being, he may know God as God is Thought in its essence. The nature of God to him is the quintessence of his own desirable qualities to the superlative.

Is either the soul or reason satisfied with "God is good," "God is love," "God is beyond unity," "God is beyond all comprehension," "He is joy," "He is beauty," "He is ineffable?" Is this abstract God more appealing than the anthropomorphic jealous God of the ancient Hebrews or the amorous gods of the Greeks or the modern God of battles who is always on the side of the prayer makers of that moment, or the whimsical God who is swayed by the selfish aims of man to change the weather to suit his wishes or to set aside laws of human making that the prayer may escape some well merited punishment, about to be inflicted by his fellow beings. Anthropomorphic or abstract, what *is* God?

God is. In the simplicity of the statement is the great mystery clear. To Be, means of itself, Immortality, Infinitude, the Formal, the Efficient Cause, the End, the Lover and the Beloved, the Thought and the Thinker, the Created and the Creator.

To exist presupposes something or cause from and by which existence is made manifest. To be is Life: God is Life. What

Life is, is indeed unknowable and the mystic is right when he cries "It is beyond all knowing." Life is both imminent and transcendent; It is both sentient and conscious and purposeful. Things do not have life: Life creates forms. "Mother Nature" is not distinct from Life: It is Life. Plato asked: "What is it that makes the soul live?" "Life," answered his pupil. "There is caravan on caravan speeding from non-existence into existence," sing Jalalu'uddin. From invisibility Life is coagulating into visibility and dissolving again into seeming invisibility. Life is a river. It flows, It forms bubbles of existence. Wind, earth, water, fire, ether are forms of motion. Life is the power that generates motion and It is the motion. "Beyond life" or "non-existence" are two mists of the mind. There is nothing but Life. Even non existence, nothingness must have Life to *be*. Without Life there is no "Goodness," "Pity," "Equality," "Number." Nor is there category nor attribute, for without Life no thought exists, thought is the product of Life.

Were Life definable it would not be unique. Its action may be described and felt but its essence as such is incomprehensible. Everything that exists is Life, man is Life but who knows what Life Is?

Flowing is the essential characteristic of Life. It has five proper motions, with many sub-motions and interblendings. These motions are centrifugal, centripetal, forward, descending and ascending. Centripetal, descending flowing is Life taking on form. It coagulates within Itself into nuclei, like the start nebulae of the various universes that in turn precipitate denser and denser matter until the seeming density of solid rock is visible. Yet it is all Life. When Life flows forward on a given plane, It is experiencing equilibrium. Such equilibrium constitute the "Night of Existence" or "*pralaya*" of eastern religions. Centrifugal, ascending force is the breaking up of form.

Life is a circular cell, of self imposed limitations. It forms within Itself at Its pleasure and for Its pleasure, a universe or a canary. It alone limits Itself. It contracts Itself into any form It desires, ever without disruption. It contains all and is contained of all. It has all attributes and is all attributes. It is Thought and the Thinker: It is Love and the Beloved. It is purpose: It is Will: It IS.

Life acts upon Itself-Life. The more subtle, the more refined.

the light, penetrates the heavier part of Itself called substance or Nature. Yet both are Life. The gentle friction of two degrees of Life, drawing towards each other is love; hate is the heat engendered friction of a higher or subtler life penetrating, boring through heavier, gross substance. All Life is conscious. Its degree of consciousness is according to and in direct ratio with the subtlety of Its form. The gross heavy substance is lethargically aware It will be destroyed by the penetrating beams. It gathers Itself into greater density darkness and more compact cohesion to resist destruction. This concentration for resistance is what man calls "evil." It has no reality except under the mental concept of time and space for in essence the resister is identical with the resisted. Eventually they neutralize each other. Life creating in Itself is the father side of God: Life created in Itself in the mother side of God—both are one.

If Life is God and consciousness is an inalienable attribute of all that is, since all is Life and that consciousness is active according to the subtlety of the form in which It is manifesting, what is the soul, and what is its purpose? The soul is simply a more subtle form of Life that interpenetrates the grosser coagulation known as body. Mind is another form of subtle Life, but not so subtle as soul. Mind, by exercise and conscious use may be developed, the exercise and constant use being but the coagulating of the form of Life manifesting as mind, the concentrating of it along definite lines whence it flows, following the five proper motions of its nature, Life. As mind may be so developed, so may the soul force be coagulated and concentrated until it assumes definite form and as such is able to act as a receiving substance for a high, still more subtle flowing of Life even as the body has received it. In the union with the higher, subtler Life, is experienced the ecstasy, the ineffable moment of contact with the Beloved. The higher Life interpenetrates every cell of the soul, to use finite terms, as a river in flood, overflows its banks and seems to obliterate all boundaries. As the river fertilizes the ground of itself, so is the soul fertilized by the essence of the higher Life. Life makes time, space and form: into Life dissolve time, space and form. When the essence of man consciously concentrates Itself, his soul becomes self-conscious, It knows that It is a drop of the Sea of Being. Only those who have experienced the ineffable union can comprehend even

faintly the indescribable joy. The mystic is content to enjoy, to sing: "I am the Beloved."

Is enjoyment all that God expects of his creatures, a mutual enjoyment of each other? If so then the attributes of mind, will purpose and power are superfluous. Does God perhaps desire Its creatures to imitate It and, proceeding along lines of creation conceived by It, create in a lesser fashion on a lower substratum, that the creatures of the creatures shall seek their creator and through the infinity of creators raise themselves to the ultimate—Life Itself, found but never comprehended? To create mind calls into being its attributes will purpose and power. Mind functioning through such attributes is but blind, functioning on one plane only unless it is interpenetrated consciously by the subtler Life of the soul. Man may learn the laws of creation and become a cocreator with God to the degree limited only by the rarity of the Life force within him. Man is God as a drop of water is the ocean only so far however as Life is, and Life is identical in all form and in the absence of form.

The Life that man treats so casually and pretends to despise is his very divinity. With his modicum of brain he may use his Life for constructive or destructive ends. He may continue to flow on one plane through his entire manifestation as a human entity or he may concentrate both his mind and soul forces, marry them as it were in a marriage with the Life of higher existence and so become conscious and capable of manifesting on other planes of existences. If he does this, he elevates his entire environment.

Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life. If ye had known me ye would have known my Father also. I am in the Father and the Father in me."